

Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARP:FMDICKMAN/NEA:SSOBER:CF

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 037683

NODIS

-STADIS FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, SA, US

SUBJECT: BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT
EXHIBITION

REF: STATE 30982

1. FACED WITH DECISIONS BY DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE INVOLVING IMMINENT, SIGNIFICANT OUTLAYS OF USG AND PRIVATE EXHIBITOR FUNDS FOR JIDDA BUILDING MATERIAL FAIR, WE ASKED AMBASSADOR ALIREZA TO COME TO THE DEPARTMENT FEBRUARY 14 TO DISCUSS THE SHIPPING AND VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FAIR AND THE ASSURANCES WE HAD EARLIER REQUESTED. ALIREZA HAD PROMISED EARLIER IN WEEK TO TRY AND GET DEFINITIVE ANSWERS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. MEETING ATTENDED BY SOBER AND DICKMAN, AND ALSO BY CAGNE DIRECTOR HALE OF COMMERCE.

2. AMBASSADOR INDICATED CONSIDERABLE ACCOMMODATION ON SHIPPING REQUIREMENTS. HE HAD OBTAINED PRINCE SAUD'S AGREEMENT TO ACCEPT, FOR PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT, POSITIVE (INSTEAD OF USUAL NEGATIVE) STATEMENTS REGARDING THE ORIGIN

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OF THE GOODS, THE VESSELS ON WHICH EXHIBIT MATERIALS BEING

SHIPPED, AND INSURANCE COMPANIES. HE HAD HAD LIST OF
PLANNED EXHIBITORS CHECKED OUT AND HAD FOUND ONE FIRM ON
BOYCOTT LIST; UNLESS IT WITHDREW, IT WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED

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TO BRING ITS PRODUCTS TO FAIR.

3. ON QUESTION OF VISAS, AMBASSADOR INDICATED THAT SAG
WOULD FOLLOW STRICT INTERPRETATION OF ITS REGULATIONS.
VISAS WOULD NOT BE ISSUED TO ANY APPLICANT OF JEWISH FAITH
WHO WISHED TO COME FOR THE EXHIBIT. (THAT WOULD EXCLUDE
SUCH PERSONS WHOM EXHIBITING FIRMS MIGHT WISH TO SEND.)
HIS RATIONALE STRESSED BELIEF THAT ANY EXHIBITORS WHO
WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SELLING IN SAUDI MARKET WOULD NOT
SEEK TO SEND SOMEONE TO REPRESENT THEM WHO THEY KNEW WOULD
BE UNWELCOME. WE POINTED OUT THIS POSES VERY DIFFICULT
PROBLEM FOR U.S. SINCE USG CANNOT SPEND FUNDS IN SITUATION
INVOLVING AT LEAST POTENTIAL DISCRIMINATION AMONG ITS
CITIZENS BECAUSE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH. WERE AN AMERICAN
COMPANY TO DISCRIMINATE AMONG ITS EMPLOYEES BECAUSE OF
THEIR RELIGION IN THIS SITUATION, THEY COULD BE SUBJECT TO
LEGAL ACTION.

4. IN LIGHT OF CIRCUMSTANCES, COMMERCE REP SUGGESTED
THAT BEST THING TO DO WOULD BE TO POSTPONE EXHIBIT.
ALIREZA AGREED AND SEEMED SOMEWHAT RELIEVED AT THIS
DECISION. HE NOTED PARENTHETICALLY THAT IT WOULD BE VERY
DIFFICULT TO MOUNT EXHIBIT ON SCHEDULE, GIVEN EXTREME
PORT CONGESTION THAT EXISTS IN JIDDA AND DIFFICULTIES
IN FINDING HOTEL SPACE.

5. IF POSTPONEMENT IS RAISED BY PRESS OR PUBLIC, WE
INTEND TO GIVE REASONS SET FORTH IN STATE 37568. IF WE
ARE ASKED WHETHER SAUDI VISA RESTRICTIONS WERE A FACTOR,
WE WILL SAY THIS WAS A POTENTIAL CONSIDERATION BUT THAT
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FAIR HAD NOT REACHED A POINT WHERE
AN ISSUE HAD ARISEN.

6. YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT MEETING HERE WITH ALIREZA
WAS CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT. SOBER THANKED HIM
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FOR HIS EFFORTS AND NOTED WE PARTICULARLY HEARTENED THAT
SAG WOULD HAVE BEEN WILLING TO ACCEPT POSITIVE STATEMENTS
ON ORIGIN AND SHIPS. INGERSOLL

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